

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 247261

43

ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY AF/W:EESVENDSEN:JWM

APPROVED BY AF:TWSEELYE

AF/W:TWMSMITH

S/S:MR. BRIDGES

NSC - AMB. SMITH

----- 068660

O 051604Z OCT 76

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 247261

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, LI (TOLBERT, PRESIDENT WILLIAM R.)

SUBJECT: TOLBERT STATE VISIT: CONGRESS AND THE OPEN
MICROPHONE

REF: MONROVIA 7105

1. IMPACT ON TOLBERT OF ADDRESSING CONGRESS SEPTEMBER 23
WAS DILUTED BY INCIDENT WHICH BECAME PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE
SHORTLY FOLLOWING JOINT MEETING. DURING CEREMONIES PRE-
LIMINARY TO SPEECH, VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER AND SPEAKER
ALBERT HELD CONVERSATION ON PODIUM WHICH, UNBEKNOWNST TO
THEM, WAS PICKED UP BY AN OPEN MICROPHONE AND RELAYED INTO
THE HOUSE RADIO-TELEVISION GALLERY, VOA, AND OTHER PRESS
OFFICES. REMARKS, WHICH SOME COMMENTATORS HAVE DESCRIBED
AS HAVING RACIST OVERTONES, WERE TAPED. NEWSPAPER
TRANSCRIPTS WILL BE POUCHED SEPARATELY.

2. VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER HAD A WARM AND FRIENDLY
MEETING WITH PRESIDENT TOLBERT LATER THAT AFTERNOON. AT
THE TIME NEITHER MAN WAS AWARE OF THE OPEN MICROPHONE
INCIDENT. UPON LEARNING OF THE PRESS REPORT, THE VICE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 247261

PRESIDENT DICTATED THE FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE TO

PRESIDENT TOLBERT WHICH WAS READ TO AMBASSADOR DENNIS
OVER THE PHONE THAT EVENING.

QUOTE. I AM DISTRESSED THAT RANDOM COMMENTS BETWEEN THE

SPEAKER AND MYSELF PRIOR TO THE CEREMONIES TODAY WERE
PICKED UP AND DISTORTED IN A WAY THAT MIGHT CREATE A MOST
UNFORTUNATE IMPRESSION, WHICH IS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO
THE GREAT FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO PEOPLES AND THE CLOSE
AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TIES WHICH EXIST.

THIS MISUNDERSTANDING WAS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE COMING
AT A TIME WHEN YOU WERE SO GRACIOUS AND YOUR SENSITIVE,
FORTHRIGHT AND EFFECTIVE SPEECH MADE SUCH A TREMENDOUS
IMPRESSION ON THE MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS AT THE JOINT
MEETING. I FEEL ESPECIALLY BADLY THAT ANY FALSE IMPRES-
SIONS MIGHT BE CREATED.

WITH WARM REGARDS FROM YOUR FRIEND, NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER.
UNQUOTE.

A SIGNED ORIGINAL WAS DELIVERED TO THE LIBERIANS IN
NEW YORK ALONG WITH A THANK YOU LETTER FOR THE LIBERIANS'
GIFT TO VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER.

3. ABOVE MESSAGE IS NOT FOR PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION. IN
RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES HOWEVER, THE VICE PRESIDENT'S
OFFICE SAID THE FOLLOWING: QUOTE. THE VICE PRESIDENT WAS
ONLY DESCRIBING PAST HISTORY. HE HAS THE GREATEST RESPECT
AND FRIENDSHIP FOR PRESIDENT TOLBERT AND THE PEOPLE OF
LIBERIA. HE HAS GREAT ADMIRATION FOR THEIR DEMOCRATIC
SYSTEM AND WHAT THEY HAVE ACHIEVED AS A NATION. UNQUOTE.

4. DEPARTMENT HAS NO INFORMATION ON ANY ACTIONS THE
SPEAKER'S OFFICE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN DIRECTLY WITH PRESIDENT
TOLBERT.

5. THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION IS TO DISCOURAGE DISCUSSION
ON THIS SUBJECT. IF ASKED, EMBASSY SHOULD ONLY NOTE THAT
THE VICE PRESIDENT HAS ALREADY CONVEYED HIS REGRETS TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 247261

PRESIDENT TOLBERT TO THE LATTER'S SATISFACTION.

KISSINGER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE247261
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: EESVENDSEN:JWM
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760375-0609
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761080/aaaacrsm.tel
Line Count: 110
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 MONROVIA 7105
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 JUN 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <19 OCT 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: TOLBERT STATE VISIT: CONGRESS AND THE OPEN MICROPHONE
TAGS: OVIP, LI, (TOLBERT, PRESIDENT WILLIAM R)
To: MONROVIA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006